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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PLC MEMBER ASSESSES ELECTIONS, HAMAS, AND
UNILATERAL DISENGAGEMENT FOR SENATOR DODD

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Former Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Ziad Abu Zayyad (Jerusalem, independent) April 21 presented his assessment of the challenges confronting Palestinians and the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA) to Senator Christopher Dodd and the Consul General. On the recent PLC elections, Abu Zayyad argued that Fatah's internal problems and the Palestinian public's anger over corruption and the peace process contributed to the Hamas margin of victory, but he cautioned that the outcome should not be interpreted as overwhelming public support for Hamas or its agenda. Abu Zayyad predicted that Hamas would not accept the Quartet requirements absent significant Israeli concessions and would instead seek ways to offset the financial crisis and its international political isolation. Abu Zayyad warned that further Israeli unilateral measures in the West Bank would likely produce the type of instability witnessed in the Gaza Strip. End summary.

Abu Zayyad Evaluates
Hamas PLC Victory

12. (C) During an April 21 meeting with Senator Christopher Dodd and the Consul General, former PLC member Ziad Abu Zayyad offered his assessment of the Hamas victory in the January 25 PLC elections. According to Abu Zayyad, a combination of factors -- namely Fatah mismanagement/disunity coupled with public's frustration with corruption and the stalled peace process with Israel -- contributed to the election results. He argued that Hamas succeeded by tapping into those frustrations and employing a mixture of effective campaign slogans and tactics that successfully won over Palestinian voters. While Hamas' election victory was significant, Abu Zayyad said that a careful review of the election results suggests that Hamas garnered less than 45 percent of the voting public's support. Its margin of victory (74 Hamas PLC seats versus 45 for Fatah) had more to do with the complexities of the Palestinian electoral system and Fatah's inability to put forward strong candidates in the district races.

13. (C) Abu Zayyad noted the regional significance of the Hamas victory, as it represented the first time that an organization with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood had acquired political power. He expected Hamas to resist pressure to relinquish power. According to Abu Zayyad, Hamas is perceived among Palestinians as the vanguard against Israeli occupation and will not easily change its well-known public positions. He predicted that Hamas would seek to drag out for months or even years consideration of the three Quartet requirements. In his view, any movement by Hamas toward

recognizing Israel or renouncing violence would require a number of Israeli concessions. Abu Zayyad argued that Palestinians viewed their national aspirations as paramount to other concerns, such as payment of civil service salaries.

Chaos to Follow West
Bank Unilateral Withdrawal

¶4. (C) In response to Senator Dodd's assessment that the Government of Israel (GOI) is committed to moving forward with disengagement from areas of the West Bank, Abu Zayyad warned that unilateral measures would likely result in further violence. He pointed to the chaotic situation in the Gaza Strip following Israeli disengagement, with militants launching rockets and the IDF responding with artillery shells, as a harbinger of what would happen in the West Bank. Despite the dangers, Abu Zayyad agreed that Israeli PM Olmert would press ahead with unilateral disengagement from the West Bank and assert that Israel had thereby fulfilled its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 242.

Abu Mazen Trying to
Stem Hamas Moves

¶5. (C) Abu Zayyad said that Abu Mazen is trying to be more assertive vis--vis Hamas, but Hamas had so far challenged him at every step. He highlighted the April 20 announcement by Hamas of the appointment of Popular Resistance Committee leader Jamal Abu Samhadaneh as Inspector General of the PA Ministry of Interior, a move that Abu Zayyad said is designed to counter the nomination of Gaza PSO head Rashid Abu Shbak as internal security chief. Abu Zayyad suggested that Abu Mazen is determined to avoid blame for any Hamas failings.

¶6. (U) Senator Dodd did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

WALLES